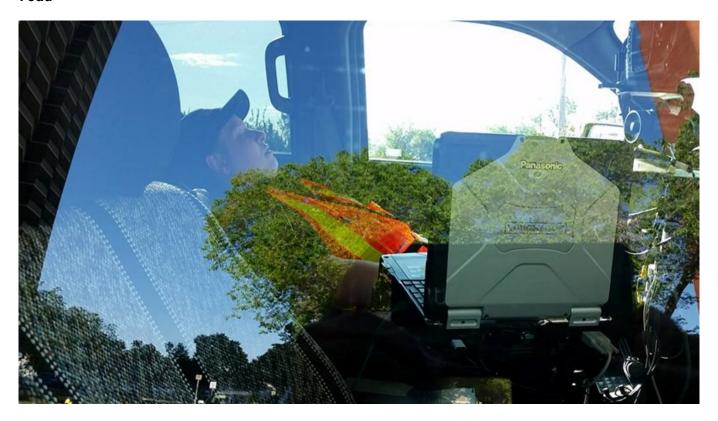# Spot The Safety Violation: Wake up, Goldilocks

How effective do you think this radar operator is at spotting speeders on the road'

Fatigue is a serious safety issue in many workplaces. For example, exhausted workers may endanger themselves as well as others. In fact, one study found that workers who work nights or rotating shifts may be *twice as likely* to get hurt on the job as workers on day shifts, mainly due to drowsiness and fatigue.

If workers are overly tired, the solution isn't for them to take a nap at work and while on duty.

This picture shows a radar operator in Edmonton sleeping on the job. Photo radar vehicles are used to catch speeding drivers on camera.

But passersby caught the operator on camera, sleeping in his truck while it was

parked on a grassy median between streets. The photos were posted online and, as a result, the operator was suspended pending an investigation into the incident.

By napping on the job, this operator likely only endangered himself. But in other incidents, fatigue has endangered not only the tired workers but also other people as well as property.

Example #1: A Chicago commuter train crashed at O'Hare International Airport, jumping off the tracks, going through a barrier and up an escalator. More than 30 people were hurt but no one died and none of the injuries were serious. But the crash did cause about $6 million in damage.

The train operator admitted falling asleep before the crash. Even worse, she acknowledged that she'd previously dozed off on the job a month earlier during another incident in which she passed a station without stopping.

Example #2: On June 7, 2014, in New Jersey, a Walmart truck slammed into the back of a luxury van carrying a group that included comedian Tracy Morgan, seriously injuring him and several others and killing James McNair, a comedian known as Jimmy Mack.

The truck driver has been charged with vehicular homicide on the theory that, at the time of the crash, he hadn't slept in more than 24 hours. Morgan sued Walmart Stores, claiming the company was partly responsible for the crash because the truck driver fell asleep at the wheel before the accident. He recently settled that lawsuit.

7 Elements of a Fatigue Management System

One of the most effective ways to prevent and manage worker fatigue is by implementing a fatigue management system that contains seven key elements:

1. A Fatigue Management Policy
2. Fatigue risk management measures, such as monitoring workers for fatigue and training them on sleep disorders
3. A system for reporting incidents caused by fatigue or situations in which workers feel too tired to work safely
4. Procedures for investigating fatigue-related incidents (Note that if workers actually fall asleep on the job, you may able to fire them. Here's a look at two cases in which arbitrators had to decide if an employer could fire a worker for sleeping at work.)
5. A program to help workers with sleep disorders
6. Training and education for workers and management on the system. For example, educate workers'and supervisors'on recognizing the signs of fatigue.
7. A process for auditing the system to ensure its effectiveness.

To convince senior management of the importance and value of implementing such a system, explain to them that worker fatigue can also hurt the company's bottom line.

Other tools you can use in managing fatigue in your workplace:

- Fatigue Hazards Identification Checklist
- Fatigue Self-Reporting Form.